



## Testimony in Support of H.B. 6659

Appropriations Committee, February 23, 2023

Submitted by Melissa Kennedy, Parent & Parent Ambassador for NECC, Killingly, CT

Senator Osten, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Melissa Kennedy. My community is part of the Northeast Early Childhood Council. We are a regional council covering the rural towns of Brooklyn, Canterbury, Killingly, Plainfield, Putnam, Sterling, and Thompson.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of **House Bill 6659**. Our children are counting on you to add \$1 million to the Office of Early Childhood budget to continue funding Connecticut's local early childhood collaboratives.

These collaboratives provide essential infrastructure, parent ambassadors, and core staffing to provide vital resources and services at the local level for our children. We ask that this be increased to \$2 million in F.Y. 25 to allow us to expand by creating 24 new collaboratives, especially regional ones in rural parts of the state so that every town benefits from local coordination.

I have been a Parent Ambassador for over a year and have personally seen how important these funds are for our community. When I had my first child 4 years ago, I was new to the Northeast part of the state and wasn't aware of the programs and support for parents and children. I wish I had known about these services when I was a first time mom. I am not alone, there are so many families who are in need of resources and aren't sure where to go. The NECC and Parent Ambassadors are vital in getting this information out to their communities.

Just over the last year, I have seen the NECC and my fellow Parent Ambassadors reach families and help in countless ways. Here are just a few:

- Resources to families affected by homelessness or in danger of homelessness.
- Mental health support resources to families in need.
- Learning supplies collected and distributed to families with young children.
- Getting families to sign up and use the Sparkler App.
- Providing school enrollment information to parents.
- Distributing information regarding free enrichment opportunities for children.

Adding the funds to the OEC budget to support local early childhood councils ensure that we will continue to reach families in our communities who need information, support or supplies. There is so much need in our communities that cannot be met without these funds.

Thank you for your leadership,  
Melissa Kennedy